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Citizen-Led Forensics: DNA and databases as technologies of disruption, novel ways to learn and intervene in the search for the disappeared in Mexico

Governmental institutions in Mexico have recognised 121,683 violent deaths in the period between 2006- 2013, and approximately 25-27,000 disappearances; however there are no national forensic DNA databases in the country. The aim of our project has been to create the first ever DNA and forensic database governed, managed and created by citizens, spearheaded by relatives of the disappeared. The recent research project I have conducted in Mexico explores contexts of widespread violence, and posits the novel idea that citizen-led forensics and DNA banking can become a tool for reparation and truth finding, and a form of contestation against the State. Hence, reverting the power relations that researchers document in western/peace sites and shifting the focus from the trope of control to the site of emancipation.